

THE JOURNALISTIC METHOD OF HUGHES O'NEILL

by

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INTRODUCTION

This study of the writings of Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, American dramatist, was undertaken to determine to what extent, if any, O'Neill uses the journalistic method in his writings. It was undertaken because of the decided differences of opinion which exist among critics of the drama and among theatre patrons as to O'Neill's methods, subject matter, and sources, and also because of the interest of the author of this thesis in the fact that O'Neill's first professional writing was done as a member of the staff of the New London, Conn., Telegraph, a daily newspaper.¹

Definition

Before entering upon the study, it was necessary to arrive at a working definition of what constitutes journalistic writing and the journalistic method. Since any periodical publication may be referred to as a "journal" and its contents as "journalism" a statement of what is meant by "the journalistic method" so far as this paper is concerned, is essential.

Webster's dictionary has the following definitions which have a bearing on the problem:

"journal, n. . . . 3. A diary; an account of daily transactions and events A newspaper published daily; by extension, a weekly newspaper or any periodical publication, giving an account

¹Clark, Barrett N. Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Plays, p. 12-13.

of passing events, the proceedings and memoirs of societies, etc.; a periodical; a magazine.

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"journalism, n. 1. The collection and periodical publication of current news; the business of managing, editing, or writing for, journals or newspapers; also, journals or newspapers collectively; the press; as, political journalism.

2. The keeping of a journal, or diary.

"journalist, n. 1. The conductor of a public journal, or one whose business it is to write for a public journal; an editorial or professional writer for a periodical.

2. One who keeps a journal, or diary.

"journalism, v.i. 1. To keep a journal of one's daily experiences or observations.

"journalism, n. English of a style considered characteristic of newspaper writing. Colloq."¹

Of literature, the Funk & Wagnalls dictionary has the following to

say:

"Literature, n. 1. The written or printed productions of the human mind collectively; especially such productions as are marked by elevation, vigor, and catholicity of thought, by fitness, purity, and grace of style, and by artistic construction.

"Literature, in its narrowest and strictest sense, belongs to the sphere of high art, and embodies thought that is power-giving, or inspiring and elevating, rather than merely knowledge-giving (excluding thus all purely scientific writings); catholic, or of interest to man as man; esthetic in its tone and style (excluding all

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Webster's New International Dictionary (1925), p. 1,168.

writings violating the principles of correct taste); and shaped by the creative imagination, or power of artistic construction (excluding all writings that are shapeless and without essential or organic unity)."¹

The Americans, in an article on American Journalism, says in part:

"There is an eager and feverish struggle for the unusual, the dramatic, and the spectacular, a constant straining for effect, a lavishness of 'scaresheads' and garish pictures, a studied and persistent search for objects of criticism and attack."²

The same article also says:

"Its dominant tone is a light and airy freedom. There is a manifest tendency even on the part of the most respectable newspapers to avoid being heavy."³

Webster's dictionary also contains the following account on literature, quoted from J. Morley:

"Literature consists of all the books . . . where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form."⁴

None of the above remarks or definitions are exactly suited to the purpose of this paper. It is not my intention to use the term "journalistic" as opposed to and excluding "literary" since numerous writings undeniably journalistic in character have become part of our literary tradition.

¹Punk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (1922), p. 1446.

²Smith, Charles Derry. "American Journalism." The Americans. Vol. 16, p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 219.

⁴P. 1, 260.

Using the above quotations from dictionary and encyclopedic sources as a basis, I framed the following definition of journalistic writing for use in this study:

Journalistic writing is that method of writing which depends for its material upon intense but not pretracted observation of the more obviously unusual aspects of one's surroundings and experiences; and the accuracy of which is conditioned by the speed with which it must be recorded in order that its timely quality be not lost. Its language must be simple, colorful, understandable. Its requirements frequently lead to an eager and feverish straggle for the unusual, the dramatic, and the spectacular; a straining for effect, a studied and persistent search for objects of criticism and attack. Its product may or may not be literature.

Sources

The principal source of material for this study was, of course, the plays of Eugene O'Neill. I have had access to all those now in print except "Lazarus Laughed." For certain early plays now out of print it was necessary to consult reviews and criticisms which gave the plot and some quotations. A great deal of reading also was done in magazines, newspapers, and books of criticism, to determine the reaction of other critics to the O'Neill plays, to get at the facts of O'Neill's life and

the sources of his plots, and to determine whether or not any other work had been done on the subject under discussion. The comparatively small amount of critical material available locally limited this phase of the study greatly, but I depended on a study of the plays themselves for most of the material.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN DRAMA AND NEWSPAPER

Before beginning discussion of the results of this study it may be well to point out certain similarities between the problems of the newspaper and those of the drama; problems which the newspaper writer and the writer of plays might be expected to solve in a similar manner.

These may be stated as follows:

1. Both must present some unusual aspect of life, or interpret some familiar aspect in a new manner.
2. Each must have a universal basis of appeal, either through the handling of a timely contemporary problem, or of some theme or subject which has a widespread, permanent appeal.
3. For greatest success each must deal with the problems of individuals, rather than of large groups collectively. The problem of the individual may be involved in or played against a background of the problem of the larger group, but the individual appeal must be there.
4. Both the newspaper and play must appeal to large groups of people, of widely diverse backgrounds.

THE BACKGROUND OF EUGENE O'NEILL

As journalistic writing must be to some extent autobiographical, I thought it expedient to pay a good deal of attention to the early life and background of the playwright, in order to determine the amount of autobiographical material in his plays, the sources of his plots, and the originals of some of his characters.

A great deal of misinformation has been printed on the subject of O'Neill's early life and his vagabond years. Much of it has been written by writers who are personal friends of O'Neill and have had opportunity to verify their statements.¹

As the source of my material on O'Neill's life I have relied for the most part on the writings of Barrett H. Clark. Clark seems to have obtained his material from original sources, including personal letters from O'Neill to Clark; letters of O'Neill to others including Prof. Arthur Hobson Quinn² and the dramatic editor of the New York Times³;

¹Clayton Hamilton, dramatic critic, neighbor of the O'Neills, and first critic of Eugene's plays, said in an address delivered on April 7, 1924, "Nine years ago he had never written a play, he had never even tried his hand at any kind of writing." (Conversations on Contemporary Drama, p. 200). Hamilton also says that O'Neill ran away from Princeton . . . "slipped aboard a ship, and signed on as an ordinary seaman. Before long he turned up in South America." (ibid., p. 202). Both of these statements are incorrect. Nine years before 1924 was 1915. The copyright on one of O'Neill's first plays, "The Web," is dated October 19, 1913, and at least eight others were copyrighted by 1915. (Dramatic Compositions Copyrighted in the United States, 1870 to 1916. Sections 74b; 4, 962a; 7, 040a; 31, 229a; 41, 575a; 42, 890a; 45, 821a; 49, 871; 50, 884).

²Quinn, Arthur Hobson. Representative American Plays, p. 953-971.

³A Letter From Eugene O'Neill. New York Times, April 11, 1920. Quoted in Clark's "Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Plays," p. 94-95, and elsewhere.

interviews with friends of O'Neill; and an article in the New York Times by Louis Kalodyne.¹

I have read that portion of the letters reproduced in Clark's book, and also the letters as originally printed, in the cases where they were available in the college library. Most of my quotations are made from Clark's book, however, for convenience in reference, and practically all of the material on O'Neill's life which appears below may be found in Clark's work on O'Neill.

The principal facts of his life are as follows:

He was born on

October 16, 1888, in a New York hotel. His parents were devout Catholics.

His father was James O'Neill, one of the most gifted of American actors, who played for years the title role in "Monte Cristo."

He had a Scotch nurse who, until O'Neill was seven, used to tell him horrible tales, and regale him with "sordid episodes, from the latest murder to the farthest terror that her whimsey could contrive."

The first seven years of Eugene's life were spent mainly on the road with his father's company.

He attended Catholic and non-sectarian boarding schools and from 1903-1906 attended Bette Academy at Stamford, Conn. In 1906 he matriculated at Princeton university, and the following June was suspended, with the privilege of returning at the expiration of one year. The suspension, it is said, was for general misconduct, including the throw-

¹O'Neill Lifts the Curtain on His Early Days. New York Times, December 21, 1924. Quoted in Clark's "Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Plays," p. 21-22 and elsewhere.

ing of a beer bottle through the window of the President's house.

After leaving college O'Neill became secretary of a small New York mail-order house, continuing in that position for one year. In 1909 he married Kathleen Jenkins of New York, and the following year a son, Eugene, Jr., was born. This marriage was terminated by a divorce in 1912, but the couple actually were together only a short time as O'Neill went on a gold-prospecting trip to the Spanish Honduras late in 1909, staying for seven or eight months, at the end of which time he got malaria and was forced to go back to the United States.

On his return he spent three months on the road as assistant manager of "The White Sister" company, and at the end of the 1910 season started on his first sea voyage. This was on a Norwegian barque, and took O'Neill to Buenos Aires after 65 days out of sight of land. He was employed by various companies in the Argentine, and spent part of the time on the beach and in water-front dives. He tended mules on a cattle steamer from Buenos Aires to Durban, South Africa, and return; then went back to New York (1911) on a British tramp steamer.

In New York O'Neill lived at "Jimmy the Priest's," a water-front saloon which was used, proprietor and all, as the "Johnny the Priest's" of the play "Anna Christie." He served as able seaman on the American line steamers New York and Philadelphia, from New York to Southampton and return. He then joined his father's "Monte Cristo" company in New Orleans, and for a short time played the part of jailer in the production, his first and one of his few appearances as an actor.

The family returned to its summer home in New London, and in August, 1911, Eugene got a job as a reporter on the New London Telegraph. According to his employer, Judge Frederick P. Latimer, O'Neill had been in love with "a very sweet young lady quite opposed to his radical ways of looking at things, and they were in the throes of breaking apart."

After six months with the newspaper, O'Neill was found to have pulmonary tuberculosis, and entered Gaylord Farm sanitarium at Wallingford, Conn. There he started to think and write seriously. After five months in the sanitarium he was discharged and spent the next several months building up his health and writing. During his earlier years he drank heavily. He does not now drink while working, nor work after drinking.

His first volume of plays was published in 1914 at his father's expense by the Gorham Press, Boston, and in August, 1914, O'Neill entered the play-writing class of Prof. George P. Baker at Harvard.

The winter of 1915-16 found O'Neill in Greenwich Village, New York, and in the following summer he went to Provincetown, Mass., where he became associated with the group which later became known as the Provincetown Players. In the summer of 1916 this group presented "Bound East For Cardiff," which was the first O'Neill play to be produced.

In 1918 O'Neill married Agnes Boulton, and two children were born of this marriage. He was later (1929 or 1930) divorced from this second wife and married Carlotta Monterey, a beautiful actress.

There are many other details of O'Neill's life, but none essential to this paper.¹

THE PLAYS OF HUGHEE O'NEILL

For purposes of reference, I have prepared a list of all the O'Neill plays I covered in the preparation of this paper. All the earliest one-act plays (those before 1915) either have never been printed or are now out of print, with the exception of "Bound East for Cardiff." I was able to find critical articles which outlined the plots of several of these early plays, and have included these plays in my list. I have not listed the plays of which I found nothing except the title. There are several of these, but most of them were destroyed without being printed or produced.

The following list is prepared in the approximate order in which the plays were written:²

- 1913—The Web. (one act)
- 1914—Thirst. (one act)
- 1914—Recklessness. (one act)
- 1914—Earnings. (one act)
- 1914—Fog. (one act)
- 1914—Bound East For Cardiff. (one act)

¹Clark, Barrett H. *op. cit.*, p. 12-89.

²*Ibid.*, p. 67-79, p. 200-202.

- 1915--The Sniper. (one act)
- 1916--Before Breakfast. (one act)
- 1916--Ile. (one act)
- 1916--In the Zone. (one act)
- 1916--The Long Voyage Home. (one act)
- 1916--The Moon of the Caribbees. (one act)
- 1918--Beyond the Horizon. (three acts)
- 1918--The Hope. (one act)
- 1918--The Dreamy Kid. (one act)
- 1918--Where the Cross is Made. (one act)
- 1918--The Straw. (three acts)
- 1919--Exorcism. (one act)
- 1919--Chris Christopherson. (six scenes)
- 1920--The Emperor Jones. (eight scenes)
- 1920--Gold. (four acts)
- 1920--"Anna Christie." (four acts)
- 1920--Diff'rent. (two acts)
- 1920--The Great God Brown.¹ (four acts) (Carries date of 1920 in standard edition² but Barrett Clark³ says it was written in 1925. It was produced in 1926.

¹Also listed under 1925.

²Eugene O'Neill, *The Great God Brown, The Fountain, The Moon of the Caribbees, and Other Plays*, p. 193-220.

³Clark, Barrett K. op. cit., p. 168.

- 1921—"The Hairy Ape." (eight scenes)
 1921—"The First Man." (four acts)
 1921—"The Fountain. (eleven scenes)
 1922-23—"Welded. (three acts)
 1923—"All God's Chillun Got Wings. (two acts)
 1924—"Desire Under the Elms. (three parts)
 1925—"The Great God Brown. (four acts, prologue and epilogue)
 1925—"Marco Millions. (three acts, prologue and epilogue)
 1926—"Lazarus Laughed.
 1926(?)—"Dynamo. (three acts)
 1929-30(?)—"Morning Becomes Electra, a trilogy. (Part One—Homecoming, a play in four acts. Part Two—The Hunted, a play in five acts. Part Three—The Haunted, a play in four acts)

O'NEILL'S PLOTS

In the belief that a great deal about an author's method can be learned from a study of the themes about which he builds his productions, I have attempted to reduce the plots or themes of O'Neill plays to a few words. I then tried the experiment of condensing these plots, or the sub-plots within them, into the type of headline commonly used by sensational newspapers, believing that if the O'Neill plots lent themselves readily to such presentation it would indicate that in selection of plot, at least, his method was journalistic; and that if

they could not be so condensed the opposite would be indicated. The results are shown below. The plays are listed in chronological order, as far as possible, with footnote references either to the plays themselves or to the sources in which I found the plots described:

Play	Plot or Theme	Headline
The Web ¹	Prostitute, attempting to escape with her child, is "framed" with murder she did not commit.	MOTHER, JAILED IN LOVE- HUNT MURDER, PLEADS FOR HER CHILD
Thirst ²	Beautiful dancer, Negro sailor, and "gentleman" marooned on life raft without water. Dancer dies, sailor wants to drink her blood, but "gentleman" intervenes. Both fall overboard and drown.	DIES PROMOTING BODY OF BEAUTIFUL DANCER or PLAYBOY A HERO IN DEATH
Recklessness ³	Wife loves chauffeur, husband orders him out with car in bad order. Chauffeur killed in resulting wreck. Wife a suicide.	WIFE FOLLOWS CHAUFFEUR- LOVER IN DEATH
Warnings ⁴	Wireless operator on passenger steamer knows he is about to become deaf but doesn't tell employers for family's sake. Next voyage steamer is wrecked, operator goes deaf and can't hear signals, confesses.	OPERATOR BLAMED FOR VESSEL TRAGEDY --- DOCTOR SAYS HE WARNED KNAPP OF DANGER OF DEAFNESS

¹Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 67-68.

²Ibid., p. 68-69.

³Ibid., p. 69-70.

⁴Ibid., p. 70-71.

Play	Plot or Theme	Headline
Fog ¹	Voice of dead child waves wreck victims. (Miracle idea).	DEAD CHILD SPEAKS, SAVES NIGHT FROM DEATH IN SEA
Bound East For Cardiff	Sailor dies in fore-castle after hard fall.	Not especially well adapted to headline but material would make good newspaper or magazine feature on life at sea, etc.
The Sniper ²	Belgian who has lost home, family, shoots into German troops and is killed by them.	SNIPER SEEKS REVENGE FOR LOSS OF HOME AND FAMILY
Before Break- fast	Bagging wife of rich man's poor son discovers other woman; husband kills him- self.	HEMILESS YOUNG SCION OF LEADING NEW YORK FAMILY A SUICIDE IN SQUALID FLAT or WIFE'S DISCOVERY OF 'OTHER WOMAN' DRIVES YOUNG ARTIST TO SUICIDE
His	Whaling captain must have his cargo though wife is going insane from long isolation.	CAPTAIN'S WIFE GOES INSANE AS WHALER SIGHTS RICH CARGO
In The Zone	Jumpy war-time nerves cause crew to suspect love-sick sailor as spy. They learn that drink caused his downfall.	DRINK DRAGS SON OF EARL DOWN TO COMMON SAILOR or DRINK WRECKS ROMANCE OF BEAUTY AND EARL'S SON
Where the Cross Is Made	Murder and insanity over greed for gold, which in reality is only brass.	BRASS, BELIEVED GOLD, CAUSED MURDER OF PAIR

¹Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 71-72.

²Ibid., p. 74.

Play	Plot or Theme	Headline
The Long Voyage Home	Sailor who longs for home farm and has saved money to go back is drugged and sent to sea.	Not well adapted to headline but subject matter excellent for journalistic use.
The Moon of The Caribbees	Women, whisky, and sad music beneath a tropic moon.	See above.
Beyond the Horizon	Frustration. Romantic stays home for love and good farmer wanders. No one is happy.	GIVES UP FIANCÉE WHEN HE FINDS SHE LOVES BROTHER
The Rope	Peculiar revenge psychology and frustration.	CHILD FINDS FORTUNE IN GOLD COINS!, SKIPS THEM INTO SEA
The Dreamy Kid	Negro gangster-murderer stays with dying grandmother and is caught.	GANGSTER TRAPPED IN HOME OF DYING GRANDMOTHER
The Straw	Love is blind, etc. Approaching death of girl makes man realize he loves her, determines to save her against any odds.	SAKITARIUM ROMANCE CULMINATES IN DEATHBED MARRIAGE
Exorcism ¹	Slums dweller, tired of life, attempts suicide.	Information on this play too meager.
Chris Christenson ²	Character study of old Swede. The play "Anna Christie" grew out of this one.	Information on this play too meager.
The Emperor Jones	Pullman porter who has killed a man, then broken jail, rises to emperor-ship of West Indian island. He says only silver bullet can kill him. Natives make silver bullets, kill him.	NEGRO PULLMAN PORTER WHO ROSE TO EMPEROR DIES AT HANDS OF SUBJECTS or 'SILVER BULLET' ENDS CAREER OF PULLMAN PORTER-EMPEROR

¹Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 76

²Ibid., p. 100

Play	Plot or Theme	Headline
Gold	Same theme as "Where the Cross is Made."	See "Where The Cross Is Made."
Anna Christie	The Sea and Love reclaim prostitute. They may or may not live happily ever after.	LOVE OF SEA RESNAKES LIVES OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW IT. (Magazine Section)
Diff'rent	A study of sex-repression. Captain waits 30 years on his true love and finds she loves his worthless nephew; two suicides.	THWARTED ROMANCE ENDS IN DUAL SUICIDE or CHILDHOOD SWEETHEARTS END LIVES ON SAME DAY
The Great God Brown	Dual personality. Creative spirit warped into something evil by struggle with asceticism. Also struggle between business success and creative urge.	This theme not easily condensed to headline but is "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" idea, which has always made fine copy.
The Bairy Ape	Brute man, infected by urge to think, tries to find his place in the scheme of things.	APR KILLS SAILOR WHO TRIED TO MAKE FRIENDS
The First Man	Small town habitry plus struggle between man's love for wife and family and for his career.	Not easily stated.
The Fountain	Love for young girl sends middle aged knight on quest of rejuvenation via fountain of youth. Finds recovery of youth impossible but quest worthwhile.	FLORIDA WITCHDOCTOR ANNOUNCES DISCOVERY OF YOUTH-GIVING FOUNTAIN
Welded	Struggle between two strong egos, one male and the other female.	PLAYWRIGHT RECONCILED WITH ACTRESS-WIFE

Play	PLOT or Theme	Headline
All God's Chillun Got Wings	Love vs. race prejudice in an inter-racial marriage.	Not easily stated. Re- sults of marriage in line with popular pre- judices. Perhaps INTER-RACIAL MARRIAGE ENDS IN DISASTER
Desire Under The Elms	Triangle. Old man, younger second wife, young son, strong New England God.	WOOL YOUNG STEPMOTHER AWAY FROM AGED FATHER or COUPLE CONFESS MURDER OF THEIR ILLEGITIMATE CHILD
Marco Millions	Rabbits in the Thirteenth Century	HANDSOME YOUNG MILLIONAIRE SPURS LOVE OF BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL PRINCESS - - - Fate True to Childhood Sweetheart
Lasarus Laughed ¹	Not familiar with the play.	Not familiar with the play.
Strange Interlude	Power of one woman over three men, plus some of the theories of Freud.	NINA EVANS WEDS AGED NOVELIST - - Once Noted Beauty, She Wrecked Lives of Men Who Sought Her; Hopes for Peace And Calm In Last Years.
Rynaeo	Youth searches for God, substitutes fanaticism for electricity for fan- aticism for Christianity	PREACHER'S SON MURDERS SWEETHEART, SUICIDES or WORSHIP OF MACHINE DROVE YOUNG LIGHT TO MURDER AND SUICIDE

¹Clark, Barrett N., op. cit., p. 180-187.

Play	Plot or Theme	Headline
Swearing Becomes Electra	Fate hunts down a New England family. Fate is assisted by an Oedipus complex.	1. Homecoming GENERAL MANNON POISONED BY WIFE - - - Love-Triangle Involving Dead Man's Cousin Ends in Murder
		2. The Hunted SON AVENGES DEATH OF GENERAL MANNON or SON OF MURDERED GENERAL SLAYS HIS MOTHER'S LOVER
		3. The Hunted SUICIDES TO STOP MARRIAGE OF SISTER and GENERAL'S DAUGHTER BECOMES RECHUTE

A reading of the above table will show that the themes of most of the plays listed either are readily adaptable to compression into headline form, or contain material which would be welcomed by the feature editor of any moderately sensational journal needing a wide circulation for continued success.

It would be ridiculous to assert that O'Neill chooses his subject matter with an eye toward its popular appeal, but it is nevertheless a fact that the subjects he chooses do have a wide popular appeal and attract to the theatre those who come to condemn as well as those who come to approve and enjoy, thus paralleling in appeal the sensational newspaper which is read by its severest critics. O'Neill's appeal is, of course, to a public on a higher intellectual level than that reached by

the tabloid newspaper or the movie thriller. He gives this intelligent audience the same thing, basically, that the sensational journalist serves to his public--a sensational treatment of subjects which have a universal appeal or a "horrid fascination." It has been said that O'Neill searches for truth and beauty in unlikely places. I have found that his truth and beauty must have a good rousing story along with it.

Clayton Hamilton says:

"Mr. O'Neill's work is frankly sensational, and --to some old-fashioned people, just a little shocking; and that is one reason why it appeals so emphatically to a generation that has substituted the excessive drinking of synthetic gin for the temperate drinking of these mellowed liquors which had graced the tables of all gentlemen since the high and far off days."¹

ORIGIN OF O'NEILL THEMES AND CHARACTERS

Many of O'Neill's plots and characters may be traced back to incidents and acquaintances of his own life, as detailed in his autobiographical account in the New York Times.

The original of the Irishman Driscoll, who appears first in "Bound East For Cardiff" seems to have furnished the basis for several of O'Neill's characterizations. An Irishman named Driscoll appears in several of the early one-act plays, including "Bound East For Cardiff," "In the Zone," "The Long Voyage Home," and "The Moon of the Caribbees."

From O'Neill's own statement we find that the original Driscoll

¹ Hamilton, Clayton, *op.cit.*, p. 198-199.

gave him the idea for the principal character in "The Hairy Ape." Clark quotes O'Neill as follows:

"I shouldn't have known the stokers if I hadn't happened to scrape an acquaintance with one of our own furnace room gang at Jimmy The Priest's. His name was Driscoll, and he was a Liverpool Irishman . . . the synonym for a tough customer. . . . Driscoll . . . came to a strange end. He committed suicide by jumping over-board in mid-ocean. Why? It was the why of Driscoll's suicide that gave me the germ of the idea."¹

Thus Driscoll may be credited with being the original of the character "Yank" who appears in several plays, including "The Hairy Ape," "Bound East For Cardiff," and "The Moon of the Caribbees." I am also inclined to credit him with being the Great Ancestor of nearly all of O'Neill's Irishmen, whether sailors or landlubbers, as the descriptions and conversations of them all are quite similar.

In "The Moon of the Caribbees" the Irishman appears as Driscoll, a fireman, and we also find him in another phase in the same play under the name of Paddy, who is characterized as "A Liverpool Irishman."

Paddy turns up again in "The Hairy Ape." In "The Rope" we find that Pat Sweeney, the farmer, is a blue-eyed, powerful, ignorant, sly, swearing, drunken Irishman who could easily be Driscoll in shore clothing. In "The Straw" the Irishman turns up as Bill Carmody, the father of the heroine. Though he is somewhat younger, the giant Pat Burke of "Anna Christie" is the character of Yank and Driscoll rolled into one.

¹Clark, Barrett E. op. cit., p. 128.

"The Drowsy Kid" probably evolved out of O'Neill's residence in Greenwich Village, as the living conditions described in the play prevailed in that area during the year O'Neill lived in the village.¹

The two treasure-hunting plays, "Where The Cross Is Made" and "Gold" probably had their origin in O'Neill's gold-prospecting trip to the Spanish Honduras.

"The Straw," the three-act play built around a tuberculosis sanatorium, quite obviously grew out of O'Neill's own experience in the winter of 1912-1913. O'Neill, as we have seen, had left a newspaper to go to the sanatorium. His principal male character in the play is Stephen Murray, who is a newspaper reporter from a small town in Connecticut (O'Neill was from New London). Murray has plenty of time to think about things while he is in the sanatorium and starts to write the things he had always wanted to write. O'Neill had the same experience.²

The play "Before Breakfast" may or may not be partially autobiographical. O'Neill went through an unhappy marriage of brief duration which he characterized as "a mistake,"³ but there is no other reason to suppose that he was writing of his own life in this play.

The scenes and characters of both "Chris Christopherson" and the

¹Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 40.

²Ibid., p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 17-18.

more successful play which grew out of its ashes, "Anna Christie," were taken from O'Neill's experience in a water-front saloon.

"In New York," he says, "I lived at 'Jimmy the Priest's,' a water-front dive, with a back room where you could sleep with your head on the table if you bought a schooner of beer.

"Jimmy the Priest's" was the original for 'Johnny the Priest's,' which is the saloon setting for the first act of 'Anna Christie'.¹

It was while O'Neill lived at Jimmy the Priest's that he roomed with the man who became Chris Christopherson.

"He had sailed the sea until he was sick of the mention of it. But it was the only work he knew. At the time he was my room-mate he was out of work, wouldn't go to sea and spent the time gussling whiskey and razzing the sea. In time he got a coal barge to captain. . . ."²

"Beyond the Horizon" also had its origin in an acquaintance made during O'Neill's time on the sea.³

O'Neill himself tells of the origin of the play "The Emperor Jones" in an interview published in the New York World on November 9, 1924, and reprinted by Barrett H. Clark:

"The idea of 'The Emperor Jones' came from an old circus man I knew. This man told me a story current in Hayti concerning the late President Sam. This was to the effect that Sam had said they'd never get him with a lead bullet; that he would get himself first with a silver one. . . .This notion

¹ Kaledyne, Louis. op. cit., quoted in Clark's "Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Plays," p. 21-22.

² Ibid., p. 111.

³ New York Times. A Letter From O'Neill. op. cit., quoted in Clark's "Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Plays," p. 94-95.

about the silver bullet struck me, and I made a note of the story. About six months later I got the idea of the woods, but I couldn't see how it could be done on the stage, and I passed it up again. A year elapsed. One day I was reading of the religious feasts in the Congo and the uses to which the drum is put there: how it starts at a normal pulse and is slowly intensified until the heartbeat of everyone present corresponds to the frenzied beat of the drum. There was an idea and an experiment. How would this sort of thing work on an audience in a theater? The effect of the tropical forest on the human imagination was honestly come by. It was the result of my own experience while prospecting for gold in Spanish Honduras.¹

It is also possible that O'Neill may have drawn some inspiration from the stories of Toussaint L'Ouverture, "The Black Napoleon" who once overthrew white rule and proclaimed himself Emperor of Haiti.

The idea for the play "The Fountain" came, O'Neill says in his note on the published program distributed at the theatre during its production,

"...from my interest in the recurrence in folklore of the beautiful legend of a healing spring of eternal youth. The play is only incidentally concerned with the Era of Discovery in America. It has sought merely to express the urging spirit of that period without pretending to any too educational accuracy in the matter of dates and facts in general.

...Juan Ponce de Leon, in so far as I've been able to make him a human being, is wholly imaginary. I have simply filled in a bare outline of his career, as briefly reported in the Who's Who of the histories, with a conception of what could have been the truth behind his life-sketch if he had been the man it was romantically—and religiously—moving to me to believe he might have been! ..."²

¹Clark, Barrett N. op. cit., p. 104-105.

²Greenwich Playbill, No. 3. Season 1925-1926. Note in the program of "The Fountain."

For the principal characters of "The Great God Brown" O'Neill drew inspiration from Greek mythology and from church history. The name Dion Anthony, he explains in a general letter to the newspapers, is a combination of Dionysus and St. Anthony ". . . the creative pagan acceptance of life, fighting eternal war with the masochistic, life-denying spirit of Christianity as represented by St. Anthony—the whole struggle resulting in this modern day in mutual exhaustion."¹

Understanding of the play is aided greatly by consulting histories of the Greek divinities who appear as human characters in the play. Cybel, the prostitute, is Cybel or Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods. In the play she agrees to be "friends—never nothing more."² In mythology the goddess Cybel and the god Attis (sometimes regarded as Dionysus) have a somewhat similar past.³

The play "Marco Millions" is said to have grown out of an interview with Otto H. Kahn, the financier. George Jean Nathan tells of it as follows:

"When Mr. (Otto) Kahn turned his haughty, critical shoulder upon this play (The Great God Brown) he asked O'Neill why he didn't give up writing such things and turn his hand instead to something which he, Kahn, might be proud to endorse. And what was this something? O'Neill timidly wished to know. A play apothecizing American big business and the American business

¹O'Neill, Eugene. Quoted by Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 160.

²The Great God Brown. Act I, Scene 3.

³Encyclopedia Britannica. Fourteenth Edition. Vol. 2, p. 661-662. Also Vol. 7, p. 398 and Vol. 10, p. 723-724.

man—a man like Mr. Kahn, for example, came the reply. O'Neill coughed and bowed himself from the great presence. His answer was to write 'Marco Millions,' the coarsest and bitterest poke in the jaw that American big business and the American business man have ever got."¹

It will be noted that "Marco Millions" was written (1925) during the era when the de-bunking of American materialism was quite popular. Sinclair Lewis had written the highly successful novels "Main Street" (1920), "Babbitt" (1922), and was writing "Arrowsmith" (1925). In the foreword to the play O'Neill says:

"This play is an attempt to render poetic justice to one long famous as a traveler, unjustly world-renewed as a liar, but sadly unrecognized by posterity in his true eminence as a man and a citizen—Marco Polo of Venice. The failure to appraise Polo at a fair valuation is his own fault. He dictated the book of his travels but he left the traveler out. . . . Polo, the man of brass tacks, became celebrated as an extravagant romancer and ever since has traveled down the prejudiced centuries, a prophet without honor, or even notoriety, save in false whiskers. This has moved me to an indignant crusade between the lines of this book, the bars of his prison, in order to whitewash the soul of that malignant Venetian."²

Actually, of course, O'Neill's "indignant crusade" has nothing to do with Marco Polo save that the travels of that gentleman made a convenient vehicle around which to build a crusade against American material success and spiritual bankruptcy. Polo is described as wearing

"... over his mayor's uniform, the regalia of Cook of Paradise in his secret fraternal order

¹O'Neill's Finest Play. The Theatre. The American Mercury, XI, p. 300.

²Marco Millions. Foreword.

of the Mystic Knights of Confucius! The band of the
 Canada lodge is with him as well as his own. . . .He
 slaps a policeman on the back and asks him his name!
 He checks a baby under the chin and asks the mother
 its name. She lies and says "Marco" although the
 baby is a girl. . . .He gives the baby one yen to
 start a savings account and encourage its thrift. .
 . .He shakes hands with a one-legged veteran of the
 Hunai campaign and asks his name. . . ."

His wools wear the ". . . .regalia of officers in the Mystic
 Knights of Confucius over their rich merchant's robes." (This costume
 is a queer jumble of stunning effects that recall the parade uniforms
 of our modern Knights Templar, of Columbus, of Pythias, Mystic Shriners,
 The Klan, etc.) Polo's

"regular, good-looking, well-groomed
 face is carefully arranged into the grave responsible
 expression of a senator from the South of the United
 States about to propose an amendment to the Consti-
 tution restricting the Migration of non-Nordic birds
 into Texas. . . ."¹

Other bits of the same scene show Marco as having passed laws that
 everyone must be happy, passing laws that taxed the rich and poor equal
 amounts in order to be democratic; and finally as having invented the
 cannon to insure universal peace, and having developed the idea of
 paper money to pay for the wars waged with the cannon. In the play
 Nicolo and Maffeo Polo are sharp traveling salesmen, and tell the
 usual traveling salesman stories.

The play "Mynamo" originated from O'Neill's interest in the
 attempt of modern man to reconcile science and Christianity, or to

¹Marco Millions. Act II, Scene 1.

create a new religion to satisfy his needs. O'Neill himself describes the plan of the play as follows:

"It is really the first play of a trilogy that will dig at the roots of the sickness of today as I feel it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that any one trying to do a big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around on the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer. . . .The other two plays will be 'Without Ending of Days' and 'It Cannot Be Had.'"¹

Many sources, all essentially modern in interest, contribute to "The Strange Interlude." We have the World War here shot down; the attractions of pure science; more than a trace of Sigmund Freud; women somewhat on the model of Strindberg's "Ersteigist";² a trace of the Oedipus complex; a millionaire advertising man; and young roving champions who fly off with their sweethearts in airplanes.

For "Morning Becomes Electra" O'Neill went back to Greek sources, basing his play on the trilogy, the Orestes, of Aeschylus, but making the principal avenger Lavinia (Electra) instead of Orestes (Oria). In the original trilogy Orestes is given a trial and acquitted without further punishment, but the more modern Lavinia, though attracted by the possibilities of confession and expiation, is unable to bring herself to it and must instead punish herself by becoming a recluse. Though

¹Quoted by Nathan, George Jean. *The Theatre. The American Mercury*, XVI, p. 119.

²Clark, Barrett K. *op. cit.*, p. 179.

the trilogy is based on Aeschylus and its time is fixed as at the close of the Civil War, its appeal is not confined to any time-period,—it might have been written with the end of the World War as the time.

The character General Mannon is a type found in several of O'Neill's mature plays,—the successful New England business man. We find some of his characteristics popping up in John Jayson of "The First Man," and in William Brown in "The Great God Brown" as well as in the elder Cabot (though not a business man) in "Desire Under The Elm." Something of the same stern fixity of purpose that animates the general is found in David Keeney, whaling skipper of "Ile" and in Captain Bartlett of "Gold" and "Where The Cross Is Made."

General Mannon is head of the Mannon shipping company, a former judge, former mayor, etc.¹ William Brown, in later life, ". . . sits in front of a backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous bourgeois culture. . . . His expression is composed and gravely receptive. In outline, his face suggests a Roman Consul on an old coin."²

Curtis Jayson is described as ". . . a typical, small town, New England best-family banker, reserved in pose, unobtrusively important—a placid exterior hiding querulousness and a fussy temper."³

Sam Evans, as we see him last in "Strange Interlude" is ". . .

¹Mourning Becomes Electra, Homecoming, Act III.

²The Great God Brown, Act II, Scene 3.

³The First Man, Act I.

simply Evans, his type logically developed by ten years of continued success and accumulating wealth, jovial and simple and good-natured as ever, but increasingly stubborn and self-opinionated.¹ In a previous scene we find him ". . . grown executive and used to command, he automatically takes charge wherever he is."² The Evans-Mannon-Jayson-Brown type of man, burlesqued and deprived of his "immortal soul" is found in "Marce Millions."

Certain important similarities may be observed between the trilogy "Morning Becomes Electra" and the play "Desire Under The Elms." I have itemized these points which I thought outstanding, as follows;

1. General Mannon and Lavinia Mannon have the same strong, perverted sense of justice and duty that is exhibited by Ephraim Cabot in "Desire Under The Elms."
2. In each play an older man is married to an attractive wife who does not love him.
3. In each play the wife falls in love with a younger relative of her husband. In "Morning" it is a cousin, in "Desire" it is the son.
4. In each play the man whom the wife falls in love with is the son of a woman who has suffered at the hands of the husband, and in each case the "spirit" of the mistreated woman returns to trouble the living.

¹The Strange Interlude. Part II, Act VIII.

²Ibid. Part II, Act VII.

5. The endings of the two plays are quite similar. In "Desire" Ephraim Cabot grimly stalks off to the barn, muttering that he has to be hard. In "Mourning" Lavinia, likewise grim, stalks into the house, after saying that only the Mannons are hard enough to punish the Mannon.

6. The two persons most alike in each play (Ephraim and Eben Cabot, Christine and Lavinia Mannon) hate and destroy each other. In each play the older person has checked the younger, kept him or her from happiness, from full manhood or womanhood. In "Desire" the younger man wins in the struggle for happiness and must die for it, and in "Mourning" the mother, Christine, wins the love of the man both desire, and is driven to suicide.

7. Both plays dwell on the "escape" idea. In "Desire" the haven of refuge is California; in "Mourning" it is the South Sea Islands.

8. In both plays the older man has been lonely all his married life, has neither been loved nor understood by his wife (or wives).

9. The wives, in each case, revolt and their revolt costs them their lives. Christine kills herself, while Abbie confesses her murder. Both cause the death of the man they love. Adam Mannon is shot, while Eben Cabot accuses himself of complicity in the murder of his baby.

10. Both plays use the device of introducing the whispering neighbors as a background for the tragedy.

In concluding the discussion of O'Neill's sources, it might be appropriate to quote from a letter of his published in the New York Sun on May 18, 1919, and reprinted by Clark. The quotation:

"... It seems to me that a bare outline of my experiences preceding any attempt—or, in truth, desire—to write might be interesting as revealing the background of real life behind my work, and as proving that I have not written out of the top of my head."¹

The discussion of sources is, of course, far from complete, but contains enough material to form a basis for the following conclusions:

1. That O'Neill, so far as can be determined from the reading of his plays or from a study of the incidents in his life, depends for his characters largely upon originals with whom he has come in contact, rather than creations of his own imagination.

2. That his plays deal either with subjects of great contemporary interest (Freud, debunking, electricity) or with themes of perennial interest (the so-called Oedipus complex, thwarted love, marital conflict, adultery, mythology) and that his subjects are treated from the viewpoint of modern psychology.

3. That having found a type, O'Neill is inclined to use it in a variety of situations.

4. That the above are examples of journalistic technique.

THE DEVICES OF O'NEILL

In reading the O'Neill plays I became especially interested in three more or less artificial methods of achieving effect which O'Neill uses in many of his plays. They are:

¹Clark, Barrett N. op. cit., p. 12.

1. Mechanical devices, principally stage props, etc., which heighten effect by distortion, optical illusion, etc.
2. Coincidence.
3. Various others including the use of artificial sentiment or "hokum," the use of rhetorical devices, and of superstition, etc.

Mechanical Devices

Of these only the better known examples need be mentioned. One of these is the fore-castle scene in "The Hairy Ape." Stage directions say:

"The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. The lines of bunks, the uprights supporting them, cross each other like the steel framework of a cage. The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. . . . The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. . . . All the civilized white races are represented. . . .but these men are all alike. . . ."¹

In another scene the entire fore-castle repeats as a chorus the words "Think!" "Love!" "Lies!" "Governmental!" and "God!" when they are mentioned, and each chorus is accompanied by these directions; "The word has a brassy metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter."²

In the one-acter "Where The Cross Is Made" the stage is transformed by lighting effects into the deep sea, and three dead men march on the stage, carrying a treasure chest.

¹The Hairy Ape. Scene 1.

²Ibid. Scene 3.

Scenes in which visions filling the mind of Brutus Jones are made to appear on the stage are used in "The Emperor Jones." The same play also distorts the appearance of jungle trees, etc., to give the effects produced upon a mind gripped by terror. The tom-tom, timed to the human pulse-beat, also is used in this play for effect.

The chief mechanical aid in "The Fountain" is the visionary fountain resplendent with colored lighting effects, which Ponce de Leon sees after being hit with a few arrows. In this fountain symbolic figures appear and disappear amidst colored lighting effects. George Jean Nathan says this scene is ". . . little more than a John Murray Anderson Music Box Revue number played behind a sequin-embellished scrim."¹

In "Walded" the man and wife arrange their arms so that "For a moment as their hands touch together they form one cross. Then their arms go about each other and their lips meet."²

One of the most striking and most mechanical of O'Neill's devices is that of circles of light, used in "Walded."

"These two circles of light, like auras of egoism, emphasize and intensify Eleanor and Michael throughout the play. There is no other lighting. The two other people and the rooms are distinguishable only by the light of Eleanor and Michael."³

¹The American Mercury. The Theatre, VII, p. 248.

²Walded, Act III.

³Ibid., Act I.

In "The Great God Brown" there are four central pieces of furniture in each scene, and they are so arranged as to give a "court-room" effect. Usually the arrangement has a table and chair in center facing front, and chair or divan at right and left.

The room-distortion used in "The Hairy Ape" is used again in "All God's Chillun Got Wings." In that play the walls of the flat in which Jim and Ella live contract, the ceiling lowers, to heighten the impression of conflict and impending disaster as the play goes on. This play abounds in mechanical effects. The first three scenes used in Act I show the spot where three narrow streets converge. The one leading off to the right is lined with tenements, the fire escapes of which are lined with white people. The street leading off to the left is lined with similar tenements, and the fire escapes are crowded with black people. In Scene 4, in which the white woman and black man are married, the same effect is preserved, with white people pouring from tenements on the left of the church to form a line down the church walk, and black people pouring from the one at the right to form a line down the other side of the walk.¹ In the same scene

"All the shades on the windows are drawn down, giving an effect of staring, brutal eyes that pry callously at human beings without acknowledging them. Even the two tall, narrow church windows on either side of the arched door are blanked with dull green shades."²

¹All God's Chillun Got Wings. Act I, Scene 4.

²Ibid.

Also in the same scene the church bell gives one startling, metallic clang, the people of the two races hurry to form two lines ". . . staring across at each other with bitter, hostile eyes." Then the halves of the church door swing open, Jim and Ella step out, and "The doors slam behind them like wooden lips of an idol that has spat them out. . . .the bell of the church clangs one more single stroke, insistently dismissing."¹

One of the most ingenious devices for achieving an effect used anywhere by O'Neill is the slave "machine" in "Marco Polo;"

" . . . a line of half-naked slaves, their necks, waists, and right ankles linked up by chains, form an endless chain which revolves mechanically, as it were, on sprocket wheels in the interiors of the shed and the junk. As each individual link passes out of the shed it carries a bale on its head, moves with mechanical precision across the wharf, disappears into the junk, and reappears a moment later having dumped its load and moves back into the shed. The whole process is a man-power original of the modern devices with bucket scoops that dredge, load coal, sand, etc. By the side of the shed, a foreman sits with a drum and gong with which he marks a perfect time for the slaves, a four beat rhythm, three beats of the drum, the fourth a bang on the gong as one slave at each end loads and unloads. The effect is like the noise of a machine."²

"Marco Millions" has several other devices, the most remarkable of them being a magic crystal by means of which Kublai is able to gaze upon the feasting of Marco and his friends, several thousands of miles away.

¹All God's Chillun Got Wings. Act I, Scene 4.

²Marco Millions. Act II, Scene 2.

Use of Removable Exteriors

A mechanical device used in at least three of the plays (*Desire Under The Elm*, *Dynamos*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*) is the removal of the sides of buildings, so that the action going on outside and inside, or in two or more rooms on the inside, may be seen at the same time. In "*Desire*" only one house was used, while in "*Dynamos*" adjoining houses were used, and in "*Mourning*" the device was used to show the exterior and interior of Adam Munson's ship as Orin and Lavinia watched their mother's visit to Adam.

Use of Masks, Marionettes, etc.

O'Neill has used masks on a large scale in only one of the plays that I read (*The Great God Brown*) but in other plays he frequently refers to "mask-like faces," or to "wooden" expressions, etc. In "*The Great God Brown*" all the principal characters use masks to show the conflict between their personalities as exhibited to the world and as they are in reality.

In "*The Hairy Ape*," produced four years before "*The Great God Brown*," O'Neill used a marionette effect in his Fifth Avenue scene:

"The crowd from church enter from the right, sauntering slowly and affectedly, their heads held stiffly up, looking neither to right nor left, talking in toneless, whispering voices. The women are rouged, calcimined, dyed, overdressed to the nth degree. The men are in Prince Alberts, high hats, spats, canes, etc. A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Franksteins in their detached, mechanical unawareness."¹

¹ *The Hairy Ape*. Scene 5.

Fixed, symbolic figures whose eyes alone move, staring fixedly but indifferently at the Polos, are used in "Marco Millions" as a background for the travelers, to show their lack of contact with and understanding or appreciation of the various cultures to which they are exposed. This device is used first to show a Mahometan court,¹ then a Buddhist court,² then a Mongol court.³

During the mourning for Princess Kukachin, at the court of Kublai, masks are used for the chorus: "... . These are masked, the men with a male mask of grief, the women with a female. . . ."⁴

In "Anna Christie" we find a suggestion of the mask-device in the description of the character Johnny-the-Priest who seems to be the Dion of "The Great God Brown" in reverse. Of Johnny we read:

"With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispel this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all this mildness one senses the man beneath the mask--cynical, callous, hard as nails."⁵ (underlining mine)

In "All God's Chillum Got Wings" a primitive mask from the Congo is made to typify for Ella, the white woman, the race-spirit of the

¹ Marco Millions, Act I, Scene 3.

² Ibid., Act I, Scene 4.

³ Ibid., Act I, Scene 5.

⁴ Ibid., Act III, Scene 2.

⁵ Anna Christie. Act I.

Negro, and it becomes for her the symbol of all her bitter race-prejudice.

Asides

In "Strange Interlude" O'Neill adopted the plan of having the characters speak their thoughts on the stage as well as their ordinary conversation. This plan was very effective in revealing character, motives, etc., but precipitated a storm of discussion among the dramatic critics as to whether or not these were old-fashioned "asides" or "soliloquies" or new dramatic devices, as to whether they were legitimate or not, necessary or not. The asides also are used in "Dynamo."

Coincidence

My attention was first directed to the use of coincidence and similar devices by O'Neill to aid in the working out of his plays, by Ludwig Lewisohn, who said in a review of "Anna Christie" and "The Straw:"

"...He gramps after straws; lover and father of a woman sign up, by coincidence, for the same ship to the same port;¹ a woman is convinced she loves one brother and suddenly discovers her choice is wrong;² an acute and poetic young journalist doesn't see that a very naive and sincere girl has set her whole heart on him (she gives the audience every indication of her feeling); he stands beside her and watches her and sees nothing;³ ...an obliging storm casts upon a barge a man who, starved in an open boat for three days, recognizes at once in the barge-master's daughter the

¹ Anna Christie.

² Beyond the Horizon.

³ The Straw.

passion of his life.¹ Synopses of O'Neill's plays would need constantly to use such phrases as: 'But just at that moment. . . but he (or she) did not realize.' Coincidence and cross-purpose prolong his actions, not the iron march of events or the unanswerable necessities of the soul. . . .²

Knowing that coincidence always makes good newspaper copy I decided to follow Lewisohn's lead to see the extent to which O'Neill uses it. The results were interesting. Of O'Neill's first preserved play, "The Web," Clark remarks as follows:

"When he knocks the woman down another man comes to the rescue in the nick of time. . . . The newcomer, a fugitive from justice, is attracted by the woman and gives her money to go away with; but Steve, who has been hiding, re-enters, kills the other man and 'plants' the revolver in order to implicate the woman when the police arrive, which they don't fail to do at the next moment. The woman is taken away, while the baby cries 'Mamaa!'"³

In "Thirst," the second play, a burly Negro sailor, a gentleman, and a beautiful danseuse are cast adrift on the same raft,⁴ and in "Earnings" the wireless operator who knows he is to go deaf but fails to tell his employers is in the next scene found aboard a transatlantic liner which obligingly took that particular trip as an opportunity to sink.⁵

¹Anna Christie.

²Drama. Anna Christie. The Straw. The Nation, CXIII, p. 626.

³Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 67-68.

⁴Ibid., p. 69.

⁵Ibid., p. 70.

But these are all early efforts and not indicative of O'Neill's present method.

In "Ile" open water and whale are sighted almost at the very moment that the skipper, David Keeney, has promised his nearly-crazed wife that he will go home.

"In the Zone" finds two shipmates watching Smitty as he conceals an iron box, though he thinks himself unobserved.

Though there are three drunken sailors and one sober sailor in "The Long Voyage Home" and the drunken sailors would normally be the easiest victim of would-be "shanghaiera" it is the sober sailor who, by coincidence, is left alone, dragged, and carried off. He is the only one who has the desire to leave his sailing life.

"Beyond the Horizon" finds Robert Mayo reaching his roadside spot, to die, exactly at sunrise.¹ Supposing he had died at midnight, or at noon?

In "The Rope" the returning runaway happens, in a beastful moment, to give a little girl a dollar to skip out into the sea. It is, of course, this little girl who discovers the old man's treasure hoard and skips it out into the sea.

Lewisohn's comment on "The Straw" appears above and need not be repeated. In "The Emperor Jones" the Emperor's command over his subjects depends largely on the fact that a revolver snapped at him by a

¹ Beyond The Horizon, Act III, Scene 2.

hired murderer failed to go off. This coincidence is expanded into the "silver bullet" story.¹

The principal coincidences of "Anna Christie" are mentioned by Lewisohn. "Diff'rent" has several minor coincidences, the first being the fact that the hero, Caleb Williams, was tricked into an affair, his first, with a South Sea Island girl on his last voyage before marriage;² the second, that his fiance learns of it two days before the marriage, rather than after.³ Others include the fact that Harriet Williams unwittingly gives her worthless son the weapon he wants against his Uncle Caleb;⁴ and the fact that Caleb furnishes Ben with the idea (possibility of monetary reward) which turns him aside from his plan of marrying Emma;⁵ and the fact that Benney's visit to Emma coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of Caleb's vow.⁶

"The Great God Brown" has no major coincidence upon which the action chiefly depends, unless it be upon the fact that both men love the same woman, but this can scarcely be classed with the others, nor can the examples in "The Hairy Ape" as it is that kind of a play to begin with.

¹The Emperor Jones. Scene 1.

²Diff'rent, Act I.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Act II.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

"The First Man" finds Martha Jayson, the wife who has always been very close to her husband, failing to tell him of the fact that she is to have a child until after he has received permission for her to accompany him on a five-year exploration trip, thereby accentuating his disappointment and dislike of the child-prospect. She had known that the child was coming for almost two months.¹ A trip out of town by the husband also gives the family much opportunity for comment.² In fact, most of this play is based on coincidence, that of the family's suspicions with the husband's dislike of the child.

In "Welded" the producer, John, knocks on the door just at the crucial moment, and precipitates the row which is the play.³ Supposing John had decided to go home without knocking, or had knocked thirty minutes later?

In "Desire Under the Elms" we find that AFTER Abbie has complained to Ephraim that Eben has "lusted" after her, Ephraim leaves her to spend the night in the barn, thus allowing plenty of time for the ensuing love scene between Abbie and Eben, without interruption.⁴ This is not the only coincidence in this play, but it is by all odds the strangest one.

In "Gold" Captain Bartlett tears up his map, his faith having been

¹"The First Man," Act II.

²Ibid., Act I.

³Welded, Act I.

⁴Desire Under The Elms, Part II, Scene 2.

shattered, and in the same instant he dies.¹

"Dynamo" has some coincidences which are perhaps out of the ordinary. During the early scenes a storm is in progress, and flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder occur at exactly the proper time to influence the speech and actions of the characters.² In the same play Mrs. Light dies during the year Reuben is away from home, and her death changes the whole course of the play, making the tragedy possible. The son has not heard of her illness or death. At the time of his departure she is a healthy woman of less than 50 years of age and "appears even younger."³

There is a quite pronounced use of coincidence in "The Strange Interlude," the most remarkable being the series which occur between Nina Leeds, Charles Marsden, and Ned Darrell. In every scene in the play in which Nina and Ned are together and there seems a possibility that they may decide to go off together, Marsden enters. His peculiar faculty for coming in upon them extends even to their correspondence. While Nina is visiting at the farm of her mother-in-law, she writes to Ned. Marsden enters the room.⁴ In the scene in which Ned and Nina decide to have a baby to save Sam's health, Ned and Marsden arrive at the house at almost the same time.⁵ Then when Nina attempts to persuade

¹ Gold, Act IV.

² Dynamo, Act I, Scene 4.

³ Ibid., "General Scene."

⁴ Strange Interlude, Part I, Act III.

⁵ Ibid., Part I, Act IV.

Ned to join her in telling Sam the facts, so that he will give her a divorce, Marsden enters and "breaks the spell."¹ Ned's next appearance is a year later, after he has been trying to forget in Europe, and of course when he enters the Evans home to persuade Nina to leave with him he finds Marsden there.² Eleven years later, on young Gordon's birthday, Ned kisses Nina good-by. At approximately the moment of the kiss, Marsden enters the house.³ Toward the last of the play Nina reasserts her old power over Ned and gets him in a trance in which he is about to agree to help her tell Sam the truth, when Marsden appears and again breaks her "spell."⁴ In the closing scenes Ned has just proposed to Nina, and she has refused him. Marsden walks in.⁵

Also in "Strange Interlude" the fact that Evans, of all the people Nina might have married, came from a family in which insanity was hereditary, can be classed only as "strange coincidence," as also the fact that he did not know of this background, though both his father and his aunt had lived at his home, insane, for years. He had been kept away from home for years, and apparently had not even normal curiosity about his ancestors.

"Mourning Becomes Electra" makes use of the coincidence device in

¹Strange Interlude, Part I, Act V.

²Ibid., Part II, Act VI.

³Ibid., Part II, Act VII.

⁴Ibid., Part II, Act VIII.

⁵Ibid., Part II, Act IX.

the first murder scene, when Lavinia comes into the room just as her father is dying, in time to see him point at her mother and say "She's guilty—not medicine."¹ O'Neill then has Lavinia faint with the poison box in her outstretched hand, thereby establishing her own guilt.²

O'Neill also endows the characters in this play with the faculty for saying or doing the thing most opposed to their own interest with a regularity that strains credulity. In the first place Christine is not content with seeing her lover, Brant, in New York, but must let him come to her house, though she has every reason to fear her daughter and old Seth, the gardener.³ After Seth has aroused Lavinia's suspicions, Brant is made to confirm them by a description of his mother which fits Seth's description, and then tells Lavinia that he "had to revenge his mother's death," which gives her the clue to his presence at the house and relationship with Christine.⁴

After the murder Christine, with everything to lose, says to Basil: "He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with each other's lives until—we poison each other to death!"⁵

In the second play Lavinia has never mentioned the matter of the box of poison, has never told her mother she had found it, but Christine

¹Bourning Becomes Electra, Homecoming, Act IV.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., Act I.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., The Hunted, Act I.

is made to confront Lavinia and then virtually confess by referring to the box and asking Lavinia if she found it. Lavinia does not say anything.¹

Later in this play (*The Hunted*) Christine makes rather elaborate preparations to insure that Orin will not believe Vinnie's murder story, and then proceeds to outline her plan of attack to Vinnie, in a boastful speech.² In the same speech she again collapses and puts the suggestion of killing Adam Brant into Vinnie's mind ". . . Don't tell him about Adam! He would kill him! I couldn't live then! I would kill myself!" (Lavinia starts and her eyes light up with cruel hatred.)³ Then Christine decides to visit Adam (though she knows that her absence would be another evidence of guilt) and proceeds to confess, with Adam, in the presence of the eavesdropping Lavinia and Orin.

In the last play of the "Electra" trilogy Orin is made to suggest his own murder to Lavinia.⁴

Hokum

The word "hokum" as known to newspapermen means, roughly, the introduction of artificialities for the purpose of heightening the emotional reaction of the reader (or listener). All of O'Neill's mechanical

¹Mourning Becomes Electra, *The Hunted*, Act I.

²*Ibid.*, Act II.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, *The Hunted*, Act II.

devices might be classed under this head, but I have chosen to reserve it for a few examples which are, fortunately, few and far between in his work. The earlier one-act plays were full of "hokum" but I will refer only to two examples. The first is the scene from "The Web" in which "The woman is taken away, while the baby cries 'Mamma.' One of the plainclothes men takes the infant and speaks to it: 'Mama's gone now. I'm your mama now.'"¹ The second is in the stage directions for "Thirst;" "Here and there on the still surface of the sea, the fins of sharks may be seen slowly cutting the surface of the water in lazy circles,"² and later "The sun glares down like a great angry eye of God. . . .On the raft the diamond necklace lies glittering in the blazing sunshine."³

One must distinguish between legitimate emotion and sentimentality, and I have therefore not included several examples which might be classed either way, depending on the reaction of the reader. The death of Robert Mayo just at sunrise⁴ comes almost under the "sentimentality" heading and the ending of "The Rope" in which the girl skips the gold-pieces out into the water most assuredly does.⁵ The same may be said of the "under-sea" scene in "Where the Cross is Made."

¹Clark, Barrett H. *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²*Ibid.*, p. 68.

³*Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴*Loc. cit.*

⁵*Loc. cit.*

"Anna Christie" is marred by the introduction of a scene in which Anna flashes an empty revolver on her lover, pointing it at his chest, though there is no need for gun-play at this point.¹

The play "In The Zone" contains a touch which Barrett Clark thinks O'Neill must now regret very much.² It consists of "a bit at a dried-up flower—a rose, maybe" which flutters to the floor from a supposed "bomb" which turns out to be a packet of love letters.

In "Dynamo" the lightning flashes with obliging promptness just when it is needed to accentuate a situation, and when the son runs away from home after a fearful quarrel the stage directions say: "(As he disappears off left the sound of wind and rain sweeping down on the town from the hills is heard.)"³

Comments of Critics

In connection with O'Neill's devices the comments of one or two critics may be apropos. Montrose J. Moses in reviewing "Dynamo" says, after speaking of O'Neill's use of the mask, soliloquy, etc.:

"In other words, I wonder whether his greatest success until now has not lain in the pliable devices he adopts to obtain new effects. For I still contend that though there is a great sweep of poetic energy in Mr. O'Neill, he needs to clarify his own mind in order not to befuddle the minds of his spectators."⁴

¹Anna Christie. Act IV.

²Clark, Barrett H. op. cit. p. 79.

³Dynamo. Act I, Scene 4.

⁴Dynamo O'Neill Searches For God. Review of Reviews. April, 1929, p. 158-160.

Stark Young, writing in the *New Republic*, refers to the distorted lines of the forecandle room and bunks in "The Hairy Ape" as "silly," "obvious," and "out of place," and calls such devices "mere prettifying" after likening them to the devices of the musical revue, etc.¹

Ludwig Lewisohn, in the article mentioned above, says in speaking of "Anna Christie:"

"At the end of the third act Anna speaks the words I have quoted; at the end of the fourth we are asked to envisage her idyllically in a cottage, a lamp in the window, waiting until her father and her husband return from their long voyage which is to bring them forgetfulness of their misery and of her shame."²

Lewisohn goes on to protest that O'Neill ". . . does not need storms, pistols, misunderstandings, coincidences."

VIOLENCE IN O'NEILL PLAYS

After his curiosity had been aroused by the apparent frequency of violent death, insanity, etc., in O'Neill plays, Barrett H. Clark made a count of such episodes in the plays he had read. His results were as follows:

"Of the thirty-five O'Neill plays I have seen or read, there are only five in which there is no murder, death, suicide, or insanity. In the others I find a total of six suicides and one unsuccessful attempt; ten important murders (not counting incidental episodes referred to in the text), nineteen deaths, nearly all due to violence; and six cases of insanity."³

¹The Hairy Ape. *The New Republic*, XXX, p. 112-113.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 626.

³*Op. cit.*, p. 123.

At the time Clark wrote the " Mourning" trilogy had not been written. It contains two important murders, two suicides, and one case of insanity (that of Grin) as well as two other murders, two suicides, and one tragic death (of starvation) referred to incidentally in the text. Of these incidental deaths two have an important bearing on the lives of the characters in the trilogy (the suicide of Adam Shannon's father and the death by starvation of his mother).

Clark also says: "Violent death is seldom the solution of anything, in life or in fiction. It is too often a makeshift device." (quoting another critic, he continues ". . . the fifth (last) act is an ugly disease that carries off many a one to whom the first four acts promise a longer life."¹

In the plays in which unhappy marriage plays a prominent part, O'Neill always chooses death as the way out, if any is found, instead of the much more humanitarian divorce court, to which he himself has resorted on two occasions. In "Before Breakfast" the husband commits suicide after the wife has told him he has no chance of a divorce.

The play "Welded" finds the warring couple reunited at the end, but in "Desire Under The Elms" the erring wife faces death by hanging or a life sentence in the penitentiary, while two previous wives have simply endured until they died. Though the marriage in "The Great God Brown" is not wholly unhappy, Dick virtually commits suicide by drinking whisky when he knows his heart is very weak. The possibility of

¹Op. cit., p. 122.

divorce is discussed in "Strange Interlude" but Nina finally waits until Sam dies of apoplexy, for her release. "Mourning Becomes Electra" finds Christine murdering her husband to get him out of the way.

THE LANGUAGE OF O'NEILL

Even the casual reader is impressed by the picturesque and colorful character of O'Neill's dialogue, in which the speech of water-front denizens, farm hands, and power-house employees is reported in all its profanity. Lewisohn says of "The Hairy Ape:" "The speech of Yank is here and remains to the end an unrivaled transcript of an American idiom."¹

Montrose Moses says "I often suspect there lurks in O'Neill some of his repertorial love of doing the startling thing, and of saying the unutterable thing as a shock to the nerves of a dumb humanity." He makes the added comment that "Dynamo" seems to ". . . show revolt and destruction to cover a multitude of ill-digested exclamations uttered with vigor."²

Clayton Hamilton believes that while O'Neill has paid a great deal of attention to the speech of the people about him, he does more than merely record:

". . . Quite evidently, he kept his ears open when he was bunking in the fore-castle and learned at first hand how sailors actually swear; but the method

¹The Development of Eugene O'Neill. The Nation, CXIV, p. 360.

²Moses, Montrose J. op. cit., p. 156.

of his writing is no more realistic than his method of construction. His dialogue has the flavor of actuality; but this flavor is produced by a studious application of rhetorical expedients. . . . He gives you the impression that he is faithfully repeating the speech of actual people that he has observed, yet there is an emotional pulsation in his style that is not present in the daily speech of the denizens of waterfront saloons.

" . . . It is, I think, his sense of literary style that accounts for his fondness for obscene phrases and profane ejaculations, more than any wish to shock the ladies in the audience or assert his unconventionality."¹

Robert A. Parke of the Independent believes O'Neill's very picturesque to be in a way confusing. He says: ". . . We are apt to be sidetracked by the purely picturesque, the tang and color of his dialogue, his power to saturate us in the heavy atmosphere of that waterfront saloon and grimy coalbarge in which the action is placed."²

The opening lines of O'Neill's earliest surviving play are described as follows by Clark:

"It will give satisfaction to those who complain of O'Neill's profanity to know that the earliest of his surviving plays opens with, 'Caw! What a night.'³

His second play opened in similar fashion, Clark says, with these lines:

The Dancer--(Raising herself to a sitting posture and turning piteously to the Gentleman) "My God!

¹ Hamilton, Clayton. op. cit., p. 216

² Anna Christie. The Straw. The Independent. CVII. p. 226.

³ Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 67

My God! This silence is driving me mad! Why do you not speak to me? Is there no ship in sight yet?"¹

O'Neill's use of expletives in his earlier plays might be regarded merely as the attempt of a young and inexperienced playwright to achieve startling expression. The same tendency, however, is manifest throughout his work. In this respect his plays simply show the same general trend exhibited in many other successful productions of the period following the World War. While this period saw the sweeping aside of what perhaps were over-hampering restrictions in the matter of speech, it was marked by a tendency to regard the shouting of profanity in unlimited quantities as proof that the playwright had actually observed and recorded the behavior of real people. O'Neill's sea plays are in much the same manner as "That Price Glory," and "The Front Page," both written by newspaper men, and both in the same "tradition" as the O'Neill sea-plays.

To show the use of racy and profane dialogue as a part of O'Neill's method I have chosen examples from each of the available plays. In some cases I have used more than one quotation:

Bound East For Cardiff

Cocky. "Makin' love to me she was! It's Gawd's truth! A bleomin' nigger! Greased all over with coconut oil, she was. Gawd blimey, I couldn't stand 'er. Bloody old cow, I says; and with that I fetched 'er a biff on the ear wot knocked 'er silly, an—"

¹Clark, Barrett N. op. cit., p. 66.

His

The Steward. ". . . I hope he's satisfied now--drivin' her on till she's near lost her mind. And who could blame her? 'Tis a God's wonder we're not a ship full of crazed people--with the damned ice all the time, and the quiet so thick you're afraid to hear your own voice."

The Steward. (furiously--shaking his fist) "God send his soul to hell for the devil he is!"

In the Zone

Driscoll. (furiously) "God blarst ut! He man at all cud be puttin' up wid the loike av this--an' I'm bot man to be fearin' anything or any man in the worrid'll stand up to me face to face; but this devil's trickery in the dark-- (He starts for Smitty's bunk) I'll throw ut out man av the port-holes an' be done wid it."

The Long Voyage Home

Olson. (angrily) "I know dat damn ship--worst ship dat sail to sea. Botten grab and day make you work all time--and the Captain and Mate was Blue-nose devils. No sailor who know anything ever ship on her. Where iss she bound from here?"

The Moon of the Caribbees

Davis. (turning to the left) "This way, Rose, or Panay, or Jessamine, or black Tulip, or Violet, or whatever the hell flower your name is. No one'll see us back here." (They go off left)

Beyond the Horizon

Robert. (his voice raised loudly) "And now--I'm finding out what you're really like--what a--a creature I've been living with. (With a harsh laugh) God! It wasn't that I haven't guessed how mean and

small you are—but I've kept on telling myself that I must be wrong—like a fool!—like a damned fool!" ¹

The Rope

Luke. (grabbing Bentley's shoulder and shaking him—hoarsely) "Yuh wanted to see me hangin' there in real earnest, didn't yuh? You'd hang me yourself if yuh could, wouldn't yuh? And you my own father! Yuh damned son-of-a-gun! Yuh would, would yuh? I'd smash your brains out for a nickal." (He shakes the old man more and more furiously)

The Dreamy Kid

Mammy. "Lawd have mercy! (She groans) Gimmie yo' han', child. Yo' ain't guine leave me now, Dreamy? Yo' ain't, is yo'? Yo' ole Mammy won't bodder yo' long. Yo' know w'at yo' promises me, Dreamy: Yo' promise yo' sacred word yo' stay wid me till de en'. (With an air of somber prophecy,—slowly) If yo' leave me now, yo' ain't guine get no bit er luck s'long's yo' live, I tells yo' dat!"

Dreamy. (slapping the gun in his pocket significantly) "Dey'll have some gittin'. I git some o' dem fust. (With gloomy determination) Dey don't git dis chicken alive! Lawd Jesys, no suh. Not de Dreamy!"

Where The Cross Is Made

Nat. (wildly) "Ho! Ho! (He takes the map from his pocket) Listen, Saut For God's sake, listen to me! See! The map of the island. (He spreads it out on the table) And the treasurer—where the cross is made. . . . God forgive me, I still believe! And that's mad—mad, do you hear?"

¹ Beyond The Horizon. Act II, Scene 1.

The Straw

Carney. (scoffingly) "It's queer they'd be allowin' the sick ones to read books when I'll bet it's the same lazy readin' in the house brought the half of them down with the consumption itself. (Raising his voice) I'm thinkin' this whole shebang is a big, thievish' fake--and I've always thought so."¹

The Emperor Jones

Jones. "I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't. Bat why I make hay when de sun shine. Was you thinkin' I'se aimin' to hold down dis job for life? No suh! What good is gittin' money if you stays back in dis raggedy country? I wants action when I spends. And when I sees dese diggers gittin' up deir nerve to tu'n me out, and I'se got all de money in sight, I resigns on de spot and beats it quick."²

Smithers. (hastily) "No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States."³

Gold

Bartlett. (with sudden rage) "Aye, brass and junk, he said, the lyin' scum! That's what he keeps sayin' when I see him in sleep! He didn't believe--an' then he owned up himself 'twas gold! He knew! He lied a-purpose! (rising to his feet--with confident defiance) They deserved no better nor they got. Let 'em rot!"⁴

¹The Straw, Act I, Scene 2.

²The Emperor Jones, Scene 1.

³Ibid.

⁴Gold, Act II.

Anna Christie

Anna. (she leans over and pulls his hands from his ears—with hysterical rage) "You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house, that's whatti—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you and Nat goes to in port—and your nice inland men, too—and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em!" (She breaks into hysterical sobbing. . . .)¹

Burke. (blazing out—turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage—his voice trembling with passion) "The rest, is it? God's curse in you! Glane, is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now!" (He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her. Chris rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter. Anna looks up into Burke's eyes with the fearlessness of despair. Burke checks himself, the chair held in the air.)²

Anna. (touched but a bit embarrassed) "Don't hawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we just got mixed in wrong, that's all."³

Diff'rent

Caleb. (between his clenched teeth) "I don't know, Homer—I don't know—en'y he ain't goin' to marry you, by God!"⁴

¹Anna Christie. Act III.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., Act IV.

⁴Diff'rent. Act II.

Caleb. (unheeding—with a sudden ominous calm)
 "But I ain't goin' to do neither. You ain't worth
 it—and he ain't—and no one ain't, nor nothin'.
 Folks be all crazy and rotten to the core and I'm
 done with the whole kit and caboodle of 'em. I kin
 only see one course out for me and I'm goin' to take
 it. 'A dead whale or a stove boat!' we says in
 whalin'—and my bent is stove!" (He strides away
 from her, stops, and turns back—savagely) "Thirty
 o' the best years of my life flung for a yellor dog
 like him to feed on. God! You used to say you was
 diff'rent from the rest o' folks. By God, if you
 are, it's just you're a mite madder'n they be! By
 God, that's all!"¹

The Hairy Ape

Yank. ". . . Hell in de stockhold? Sure! It
 takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my
 fav'rite climate. I sat it up! I get fat on it!
 It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it reart! It's
 me makes it movel! Sure, on'y for me everyting
 stops. It all goes dead, get me? De noise and
 smoke and all de engines movin' de world, dey stop.
 Dere ain't nothin' no more! . . . I'm de ting in
 coal dat makes it burn; I'm steam and oil for de
 engines; I'm de ting in noise dat makes yuh hear
 it; . . . I'm de ting in gold dat makes it money!
 And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat
 stands for de whole thing! And I'm steel—steel—
 steel! I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind
 it! . . .² . . . Slaves, hell! We run de whole works.
 . . ."

The First Man

Curtis. (staring at her, then from one to another
 of the rest with withering scorn) "Hal! Now you
 think you've conquered, do you? No, I'm not go-
 ing to stay. Do you think your vile slander could
 influence me to give up my work? And neither shall
 you influence the life of my son. I leave him

¹Diff'rent. Act II.

²The Hairy Ape. Scene 1.

here. I must. But not to your tender mercies.
No, no! Thank God, there still remains one Jayson
with unswayed integrity to whom I can appeal. . .¹

The Fountain

Juan. "No! (Yells of rage. The mob surges forward. Juan raises his sword.) I will kill the first one who—(They recoil again, all but Quesada. With his free hand Juan sweeps him to one side contemptuously—then fiercely threatening the crowd) Will you rebel against the Governor of your King? Then you are traitors to Spain! And, by God's blood, I will hang one of you on every tree!"²

Welded

Cape. (in a terrible state, sobbing with rage and anguish) "Gone! All our beauty gone! And you don't love him! You lie! You did this out of hatred for me! You dragged our ideal in the gutter—with delight! (Wildly) And you pride yourself you've killed it, do you, you actress, you barren coot? (With savage triumph) But I tell you only a creature can really destroy! (With a climax of frenzy) And I will! I will! I won't give your hatred the satisfaction of seeing our love live on in me—to torture me! I'll drag it lower than you! I'll stamp it into the vilest depths! I'll leave it dead! I'll murder it—and be free!"³

All God's Chillun Got Wings

Wila. "It's his Old Man—all dolled up like a circus horse! Well, they can't help it. It's in the blood, I suppose. They're ignorant, that's

¹The First Man. Act IV.

²The Fountain. Scene 5.

³Welded, Act I.

all there is to it. (She moves to the wash--
forcing a mocking tone) Hello, sport! Who d'you
think you're scaring? Not me! I'll give you
the laugh. He won't pass, you wait and see.
Not in a thousand years! (She goes to the window
and looks down at the street and mutters) All
black! Every one of them! (Then with sudden
excitement) No, there's one. Why, it's Shorty!
(She throws the window open and calls) Shorty!
Shorty! Hello, Shorty! (She leans out and
waves--then stops, remains there for a moment
looking down, then shrinks back on the floor
suddenly as if she wanted to hide--her whole
face in an anguish) Say! Say! I wonder--No,
he didn't hear you. Yes, he did, too! He must
have! I yelled so loud you could hear me in
Jersey! . . . Where does he come in to--for
God's sake, who is Shorty, anyway? A pimp!
Yes, and a dope peddler, too! D'you mean to say
he'd have the nerve to hear me call him and then
deliberately--?¹

Desire Under The Stars

Onet. (with one sardonic) "No! (He begins
to recover. Gets slowly to his feet--strangely)
I cals'late God give it to 'em--not yew! God's
hard, not easy! Maybe they's easy gold in the
West but it hain't God's gold. It hain't fur me.
I kin hear His voice warnin' me againt' be hard
an' stay on my farm. I kin see his hand usin'
Eben t' steal t' keep me from weakness. I kin
feel I be in the palm o' his hand, His fingers
guidin' me. (A pause, then he mutters sadly)
It's a-goin' t' be lonesome now than ever it
war afore--an' I'm gittin' old, Lord--ripe on
the bough. . . . (Then stiffening) Veal--what
d'ye want? God's lonesome, hain't He? God's
hard an' lonesome!²

¹All God's Chillun Get Wings. Act II, Scene 1.

²Desire Under The Stars. Part II, Scene 4.

The Great God Brown

Bion. (in a steely voice) "I've been the brains! I've been the design! I've designed even his success—drunk and laughing at him—laughing at his career! Not proud! Sick! Sick of myself and him! Designing and getting drunk! Saving my woman and children! (He laughs) Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it—what was left of my life. It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!—but so concealed that the fools will never know. . . . But Mr. Brown, the Great God Brown, has no faith! He couldn't design a cathedral without it looking like the First Supernatural Bank! He only believes in the immortality of the moral belly! . . ."¹

"Marce Millions"

Marce. (plunging in confidently on what he thinks is a sure point of attack) "My tax scheme, Your Majesty, that got such wonderful results is simplicity itself. I simply reversed the old system. For one thing I found they had a high tax on excess profits. Imagine a profit being excess! Why, it isn't humanly possible! I repealed it. And I repealed the tax on luxuries. I found out the great majority in Yang-Chau couldn't afford luxuries. The tax wasn't democratic enough to make it pay! I crossed it off and I wrote on the statute books a law that taxes every necessity in life, a law that hits every man's pocket equally, be he beggar or banker! And I got results!"²

Strange Interlude

Evans. (very seriously—in a confidential tone) "I couldn't have said that two years ago—and believed it. I've changed a hell of a lot! Since the baby was born, I've felt as if I had a

¹The Great God Brown, Act II, Scene 3.

²Marce Millions, Act II, Scene 1.

shot of dynamite in each arm. They can't pile on the work fast enough. (he grins--then seriously) It was about time I got hold of myself. I wasn't much for Nina to feel proud about having around the house in those days. Now--well--at least I've improved. I'm not afraid of my own shadow any more.¹

Barrell. (doggedly--struggling with himself) "I won't touch a life that has more than one cell. (harshly) And I wouldn't help you in this, anyway. You've got to give up owning people, meddling in their lives as if you were God and had created them!"²

Evans. (bounding back to the desk, his face congested and purple with a frenzy of joy, dancing about) "He's won! By God, it was close! Greatest race in the history of rowing! He's the greatest oarsman God ever made! (embracing Nina and kissing her frantically) Aren't you happy, Nina? Our God-dani! The greatest ever!"³

Dynamo

Pife. "This story in the paper! There was a man in Ohio many years back killed another fellow in a fight about a girl; he got twenty years for it, but the girl helped him to escape and they both got clean away to the coast, where he settled down under another name and they were married and had a daughter. He became one of the town's best citizens, and damned if his daughter didn't get engaged to the minister's son. Then, just before the wedding, the old man feels he's honor bound to tell his future son-in-law the secret of his past; so the damned idiot blathers the whole story of his killing the man and breaking jail! And what do you suppose the young skunk does? Breaks off with the

¹ Strange Interlude, Part II, Act VI.

² Ibid., Part II, Act VIII.

³ Ibid.

girl and goes to the police with the story, saying he's bound by his conscience to squeal on him."¹

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

Homecoming

Hannon. "But you've known it was there! Don't lie, Christine! (he looks at her still face and closed eyes, imploring her to reassure him--then blunders on doggedly) Maybe you've always known you didn't love me. I call to mind the Mexican War. I could see you wanted me to go! I had a feeling you'd grown to hate me. Did you? (she doesn't answer) That was why I went. I was hoping I might get killed. Maybe you were hoping that, too. Were you?"²

Hannon. "When I came back you had turned to your new baby, Orin. I was hardly alive for you any more. I saw that. I tried not to hate Orin. I turned to Vinnie, but a daughter's not a wife. Then I made up my mind I'd do my work in the world and leave you alone in your life and not care. That's why the shipping wasn't enough--why I became a judge and a mayor and such vain truck, and why folks in town look on me as so able! Hal! Able for what? Not for what I wanted most in life! Not for your love! . . ."³

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

The Hunted

Orin. "No! But I'm going to step your damned --but I'm a fool to pay any attention to you! The whole damned thing is too insane! I won't talk to a crazy woman! But, by God, you look out, Vinnie! You leave nether alone or--!"⁴

¹ *Dynamo*, Act I, Scene 1.

² *Homecoming*, Act III.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Hunted*, Act III.

Orin. (in a burst of murderous rage) "I'll kill that bastard! (in anguished uncertainty again) But you haven't proved anything yet! It's only your word against hers! I don't believe you! You say Brant is her lover! If that's true, I'll hate her! I'll know she murdered Father then. I'll help you punish her! But you've got to prove it!"¹

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

The Haunted

Lavinia. (desperately--at the end of her tether) "Yes! Before God! Before anything! (then glaring at her--with a burst of rage) You leave me alone--go away--or I'll get Orin's pistol and kill you."²

Lavinia. "Peter! Let me look at you! You're suffering! Your eyes have a hard look! They've always been so trustful! They look suspicious and afraid! Have I done this to you already, Peter? Are you beginning to suspect me? Are you wondering what it was Orin wrote?"³

It is not my contention that the above excerpts from the various plays are necessarily typical of the speech of the characters. They are, I think, typical of the language used in moments of great stress.

The excerpts do show:

1. That O'Neill reports the language of his characters, the brogue, dialect, or other peculiarities, with an attempt at fidelity to life.
2. That in so reporting he does not alter the speech to fit the conventions, but rather expects the conventions to fit the speech.

¹The Haunted, Act III.

²The Haunted, Act IV.

³Ibid.

3. That O'Neill uses a great deal of profanity, a characteristic in common with other playwrights of the period, many of whom had a great deal of journalistic experience in which they, like O'Neill, have had much opportunity to observe life and speech under great emotional stress.

SUMMARY

We have covered the origin of O'Neill's plots and of some of his characters; the nature of his plots; the devices he has used, including mechanical devices, devices of circumstance, and devices of rhetoric; his use of violence; use of "hokum"; and the language of his plays. Results may be summarized as follows:

1. In the study of the origin of plots and characters it was found that O'Neill depends to a great extent if not entirely upon observed incidents; upon people he has met or about whom he has read; for his writings. From his own letters we find that he takes an interest in proving ". . . that I have not written out of the top of my head."¹

2. O'Neill's plots were readily reduced to headline form in most cases, and in the others the adaptability of the theme to newspaper or magazine use could be seen.

3. O'Neill's dependence upon mechanical devices such as distorted settings, use of masks; and upon devices of circumstance such as coincidence; compares with such newspaper and magazine devices as the

¹ Clark, Barrett H. op. cit., p. 12.

use of variegated sizes of headlines, varied facings of type, unusual photographs, colored inks, trick typing for emphasis, etc.

4. Direct and violent action frequently is resorted to by O'Neill's characters as a solution of their problems or an outlet for their repressions. The interest-value of such actions has long been recognized by publishers of newspapers, magazines, and "detective-fiction" books. Some journalists and some psychiatrists contend that the printing of crime news and the writing of books and plays on crime are valuable in preventing crime, because they furnish vicarious outlets for the suppressed criminal in each of us. This contention now used in defense of sensational journalism traces back to Aristotle's use of the term *katharsis* (*catharsis*) in his definition of tragedy.

A writer in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says:

"Catharsis means purification. Since the time of Aristotle the term has been definitely associated with the question of the effects of tragedy on the spectators or on the actors. Aristotle maintained that tragedy and also certain kinds of music tend to purify the spectators by artistically exciting certain emotions which act as a kind of homeopathic relief from their own selfish passions. Goethe was of the opinion that the catharsis affects the actors in the tragedy rather than the spectators or the readers. Lessing, on the other hand, held that it affects the spectators and readers rather than the performers. Lessing also maintained that catharsis takes the form of a sublimation of the emotions or their conversion into virtuous dispositions."¹

¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Fourteenth Edition, Vol. 5, p. 32.

V.T. Harris, in a discussion of the term in Webster's dictionary, says in part:

" . . . Aristotle held that tragedy purifies the spectator by showing him how his feelings and convictions will result when carried out. . . . Without making the experience himself, he profits by the world experience depicted for him by the poet. It is more or less in human nature to recoil against direct advice, especially moral advice. . . . but in the work of art we see the moral energies of society acting upon ideal personages, and the lesson to the spectator is more impressive and more wholesome, because it is accepted by him in his freedom. . . ."¹

Thus we find a theory that originated in connection with Greek drama now applied in defense of certain sensational aspects of journalism, and we find these same sensational aspects in the plays of O'Neill. This is another manifestation of the similarity between the problems of the drama and the newspaper in general, and of the relationship between O'Neill and Journalism in particular.

5. O'Neill's language, for the most part, reflects accurately the speech of actual persons in similar circumstances to those of his characters. In its faithfulness to detail it is reportorial in its exactitude of observation and perhaps super-reportorial in its recording, as there are certain taboos of language which reporters must not violate.

Comments of two critics seem particularly appropriate at this place. One is Arthur Hobson Quinn, who says: "Mr. O'Neill is no doctrinaire, and he is concerned with painting a section of life rather than teaching a lesson. . . ."²

¹ Webster's New International Dictionary (1925) p. 1,178.

² Quinn, Arthur Hobson. The Significance of Recent American Drama. Scribner's Magazine. Vol. LXIII. p. 100.

The other is Sheldon Cheney, who says in a discussion of the new generation of American dramatists ". . . In the end the story of the Realistic drama in America comes down to O'Neill alone."¹ Of the realist-dramatist Cheney says:

" . . . With a newspaperman's flair for what is dramatic in experience, he entered the clinic of life, he dissected, he analysed people down to the last bitter detail of motive, of feeling, of thought. He showed humanity the face of its own weakness, its passions, its selfishness, its follies. He still sits there holding up that mirror."²

In discussing O'Neill Cheney comments:

"He was a Realist first, with a keen selective sense and sometimes an uneasy knack for the revealing unpleasant word, and it is not yet clear that he is to transcend Realism in any great way; but in 'The Emperor Jones,' 'The Hairy Ape,' and 'Lazarus Laughie' (sic) he threw off the chains of imitativeness and widened the expressiveness of our state. He did this with violence and speed and piled-up emotion rather than with serenity and depth; he broke over the old rigidities of well-made-play dramaturgy without even suggesting a new play-structure with positive virtues. . . ."

Conclusion

Definition and summary taken together bring us to the conclusion that O'Neill's method may definitely be considered journalistic. Certainly his method of writing ". . . depends for its material upon intense . . . observation of the more obviously unusual aspects of . . . surroundings and experiences." His language is "simple, colorful,

¹Cheney, Sheldon. *The Theatre. Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting, Stagecraft*, p. 463.

²*Ibid.*, p. 480-489.

understandable," and the requirements of his plays ". . . frequently lead to an eager and feverish struggle for the unusual, the dramatic, and the spectacular, a straining for effect, a studied and persistent search for objects of criticism and attack."

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